Sample “Letters to Editor”

To the Editor:

Recently, you published a piece [name and author of article] which addresses [person/event X] and drew a parallel between [them/that] and the historical figure of King Richard III of England, who lived over 500 years ago. Modern historians overwhelmingly agree that Shakespeare’s “history plays” cannot be taken as historical truth and are riddled with factual errors, distorted characterizations, and fabricated scenes. While the real Richard III’s accession to the English throne was unorthodox, it was in fact legal and supported by the three estates of parliament (church, lords, commons). Unlike his predecessor and successor, Edward IV and Henry VII, it was not brought about through the brutality of battle or substantial loss of life. Richard III is now seen by historians as an example of good lordship to all strata of medieval society, particularly the common people. The laws passed during his reign expanded civil rights, and sought to prevent fraud and abuse. Under Richard III, it was required to offer bail to defendants. Everyone had a right to be tried before a jury that was not influenced by bribes or external pressure from wealthy magnates. To deter fraud and promote transparency in property transactions, titles and deeds had to be publicly announced. Richard III protected pressmakers from xenophobic trade legislation; Caxton (England’s first pressmaker) was protected from trade harassment even though he employed many foreign workers. None of these things could be said of [X]. Journalists need to think carefully about which historical villains they compare modern-day people to, because making such flawed comparisons not only misleads the public about history, but also minimizes the misdeeds being done today.

[Your Name]

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Shorter version

To the Editor:

Recently, you published a piece [name and author of article] which drew a parallel between [X] and the historical figure of King Richard III of England. Modern historians overwhelmingly agree that Shakespeare’s “history plays” cannot be taken as historical truth and are riddled with factual errors, distorted characterizations, and fabricated scenes. While the real Richard III’s accession to the English throne was unorthodox, it was in fact legal and supported by the three estates of parliament. Unlike his predecessor and successor, Edward IV and Henry VII, it was not brought about through the brutality of battle and substantial loss of life. Richard III is now seen by historians as an example of good lordship to all strata of medieval society, particularly the common people for whose benefit his public laws were aimed. Making such flawed comparisons not only misleads the public about history, but also minimizes the misdeeds being done today.

[Your Name]

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Response suitable for Comments sections in digital newspapers

I disagree with the author’s drawing a parallel between (X person/X event) and the figure of Richard III. Shakespeare’s “history plays” cannot be taken as historical truth and are riddled with factual errors and distortions. Rather than taking the crown by battle, the real Richard III became king with support of the church, the commons, and the lords. Richard III is now seen by historians as an example of good lordship to all strata of medieval society, particularly the common people for whose benefit his public laws were aimed. Modern forensic psychologists have determined he never demonstrated sociopathic tendencies and was certainly nothing like the caricature created for the stage. Learn more here: <https://r3.org/meet-richard-iii/>

[Your name]